

Letters to the editor

The CIA and 'Counter-Spy'

Charles Bartlett, in his column of Dec. 29, states: "The assassination of the CIA station chief, Richard Welch, in Athens is a direct consequence of the stagey hearings of the Church committee."

It seems that everyone, from *Counter-Spy* magazine to Sen. Frank Church, has been blamed for Welch's tragic death except those murderers who actually plotted and pulled the trigger.

And even if we must put some minor portion of the blame on outside contributing forces, Senate hearings and the press are not the culprits. Sen. Church and the press are only "guilty" of exposing the real culprit, the past immoral actions of the CIA.

It is ironic indeed that defenders of the CIA should accuse Congress and the press of aiding assassins when in the past the CIA has, directly and intentionally, aided would-be assassins. It's like the pot calling the mirror black.

David Solomon
Greensboro, N.C.

Your editorial, "A matter for prosecution" (Dec. 31), shows an alarming elitism within the newspaper club.

Counter-Spy is a low-budget, small-staff periodical with a serious political aim: bringing to light things the government is doing which the public probably does not want done. Some of the things they expose may be genuinely secret in the sense that foreign governments don't know about them, but most



DOUG PORTER
Co-editor of 'Counter-Spy'

are secret only in that our government has not acknowledged them and has not included them in the cycle of press-release-into-news-story that pathetically substitutes for fact finding in a paper the size of *The Star*.

Richard Welch's identity was in the latter category, since his connection with the CIA has been published as long ago as 1968. By going outside the government press-officer's definition of what is news, and by telling the American people things that foreign intelligence agencies already know, and by doing so without large commercialization and advertizing revenues, *Counter-Spy* was the archetype of

how a free press keeps a government honest.

In this sense, *Counter-Spy* is at the core of the First Amendment, much more so than a commercial enterprise like *The Star*.

A careful rereading of your editorial shows you do not say who you think should be prosecuted for what, so I suppose your hints in that direction are harmless enough. What rankles is your calling the name "*Counter-Spy*" frivolous. What's so eternally serious about naming newspapers after celestial bodies?

Gaillard T. Hunt
Washington, D.C.

In your Jan. 1 issue, Doug Porter is quoted as saying that the next issue of the "Fifth Estate's" *Counter-Spy* will list the names of 71 CIA agents (in addition to the 225 already published).

In September, 1776, Benjamin Franklin was dispatched to France to meddle in the internal affairs of that country; i.e., get the French to support the American colonists in their war against England. Presumably, Franklin was operating under "light diplomatic cover" in this covert mission. In short, his status was not unlike that of Richard Welch when the latter was assassinated.

Assume Franklin had been assassinated in his covert mission as a result of publicity such as *Counter-Spy* grinds out. Could editors of that day contend, as *Counter-Spy* does in the Welch case, that "it's not our fault . . . our job is to expose every clandestine agent until the CIA (i.e., the U.S. government) abandons its covert efforts?"

One can only wonder where Messrs. Porter, et al., would have stood about 200 years ago. One is also given to wondering where they stand now.

W. Remes
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